

Sample A

Thanks for Listening

Strong lead?
Strong
conclusion?
Good title?

I suppose almost everyone is influenced by his or her father—whether for good or bad. In my case, the influence has been a good one, and it’s mostly for a small reason many people might overlook. My dad is the best listener I have ever known or seen.

Dad chose his profession, behavioral psychology, in order to help people. Lots of people have lofty goals like this, but I think it takes a listener to turn those goals into reality. Dad helps couples find ways to talk civilly to each other because they learn to hear not just words, but the hurt or frustration behind them. He helps teenagers build self-confidence by finding listeners in their own lives—a friend, sibling, or someone who will give you a minute of undivided attention. Occasionally, he guides someone into a new career because they learn to listen to their *own* internal voice—and they discover that their occupational choices are actually in conflict with their own goals, and produce stress. “A lot of headaches,” Dad always says, “come from not listening to yourself.”

My dad typically works 60 to 70 hours a week, but still makes time for his family. I see how tired he is, yet he’ll plan a hike—or just a backyard barbecue. If I need to talk, he’ll stop what he’s doing, pull up a chair, and lean in, like he really cares what I have to say. He doesn’t interrupt—as I see many other parents do. He thinks about what *I’ve* said before *he* speaks.

I have no idea, as yet, whether I will be a behavioral psychologist. Dad says I should take my time making this decision, and I will. I know one thing, though: I will be a good listener.

Sample B

My Most Memorable Experience

The most memorable experience I have had was when our family took a trip to Australia and we had a chance to go snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reef.

In case you do not know, the Great Barrier Reef is the largest living thing on the planet. It is made up mostly of coral, which is an animal (as I learned from our guide) and is alive, even though it does not move. Coral larvae attach themselves to something, such as a rock, sunken ship, or other coral, and the colony grows and grows. In the case of the Great Barrier Reef, the ocean temperatures and sunlight have provided the right conditions for the reef to grow to its amazing size—more than 1600 miles long. It did not look the way I expected. I thought every part of it would be under water, but actually, there are over 900 islands, so when you sail through it, it is like entering another world.

The water is extremely clear—which our guide explained is important so that the coral algae get the light they need to make food. They are the first link in the food chain. We could see octopuses, thousands of clown fish and yellow tang, small sharks, starfish, and some jellyfish. Some creatures are dangerous, and our guide told us what to watch out for. She also told us not to step on the coral. It looks hard and tough, but it is really fragile.

We had an amazing time, and I will never forget my trip to the Great Barrier Reef. Everyone should get to see this great work of nature.



©2009, Allyn & Bacon, a division of Pearson Education. Developed by Vicki Spandel. All rights reserved.

Strong lead?
Strong
conclusion?
Good title?